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ABSTRACT

In 1877, Standing Bear and his people, the Ponca (Indians), were forcibly removed from their land in northern Nebraska and sent to Indian Territory. Since no provision for food or shelter had been made for them, a number of the tribe, including Standing Bear's son, did not survive the harsh winter. In defiance of the relocation order, Standing Bear decided to return to Nebraska with his people. Not long after visiting relatives near Omaha, the Ponca were arrested. With the help of local Indian rights activists, Standing Bear sued in district court for the right to return home. The judge found in favor of Standing Bear, giving the rights of a U.S. citizen to a Native American for the first time. The scenario asks the student to become part of a team of four investigative reporters working for an eastern newspaper. The assignment is to assemble a portfolio of interviews and background information relevant to the case for newspaper publication. The story's background includes a look at the policy of Indian removal, the current state of the war with the Plains Indians, and the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Learning advice details four steps to follow: (1) gather information; (2) create a graphic organizer; (3) write your story; and (4) interview your subject. The teacher notes section defines grade/unit; addresses California history/social science standards; and discusses history/social science analysis skills. Resource lists appear throughout the activity guide. (BT)

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Schools of California Online Resources for Education (SCORE): Connecting California's Classrooms to the World

The Trial of Standing Bear

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The Trial of Standing Bear

Introduction

In 1877, Standing Bear and his people, the Ponca, were forcibly removed from their land in northern Nebraska and sent to Indian Territory. When they arrived they found that no provision for food or shelter had been made for them. As a result, a number of the tribe, including Standing Bear's son, did not survive the harsh winter. In defiance of his relocation order, Standing Bear decided to return to his homeland in Nebraska with as many of his people as wished to go with him. They set out on foot, begging along the way for food and shelter. Near the city of Omaha they stopped to visit their relatives, the Omaha people. Not long thereafter the Ponca were arrested and held by General George Crook. With the help of local Indian rights activists and, some say, General Crook himself, Standing Bear sued in U.S. District Court for his right to return home. Judge Elmer Dundy found in favor of Standing Bear, giving for the first time the rights of a U. S. citizen to a Native American.

Scenario for Students

It is 1879 and Judge Elmer Dundy of the U. S. District Court has just issued his judgment in a case involving Standing Bear, a Ponca chief, who was arrested and detained near Omaha, Nebraska, by General George Crook. Standing Bear was accused of leaving Indian Territory where he and his tribe had been forced to relocate from their home in northern Nebraska. You are part of a team of investigative reporters working for a major eastern newspaper whose readers are very interested in events occurring "out West." Your assignment is to assemble a portfolio of interviews and background information that is relevant to the case for publication by your paper. You will be writing about Standing Bear, General Crook, and Susette LaFlesche. (Susette LaFlesche, also known as "Bright Eyes," was an Indian rights activist.) The background part of your story will include a look at the policy of Indian Removal, at the current state of the war with the Plains Indians, and at the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

Note: With your teacher, please review your school's acceptable use policy for work on the Internet. Also, links to the Web often change. Tell your teacher when you find a dead link in this guide.

The Task

Reporter #1: Writes Standing Bear's story. Where did he live and what was his life like before he was relocated to Indian Territory? Did he have a family? What happened to them? What were the circumstances leading up to his arrest? Why did he sue the federal government? What was the outcome?

Reporter #2: Writes General George Crook's story. Where was he from? Where did he go to school? What did he do in the Civil War? How did he get involved in fighting the Plains Indians? What did the Indians think of him? What did he think of them? What kind of man was he? What battles did he fight against the Indians? What famous Indian warriors fought against him? How did he get involved in the Standing Bear case?

Reporter #3: Writes about Susette LaFlesche. Who was she? What was her family background? How was she involved in the Standing Bear case? What can we learn about Indian education from her life?

Reporter #4: Researches historical background. Writes about the Indian policies of the U.S. government, including the policy of Indian relocation. What were the roots of this policy? Relates Manifest Destiny to the westward movement and discusses the impact of this movement on the native peoples. Analyzes the Fourteenth Amendment and its impact on the Standing Bear case.

The Whole Group: Becomes an editorial committee and produces a special edition of the newspaper which they work for. This edition will include the four stories written by the reporters and may include photographs and original artwork. Students are encouraged to create their own political cartoons reflecting the issues they wrote about in their stories.

Learning Advice

Step One: Gathering Information

You may use your textbook, encyclopedias, and information from the Internet. Helpful web sites include:

For information on Andrew Jackson and the policy of Indian removal:
www.msnbc.com/onair/nbc/nightlynews/Fleecing/removal.asp
www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/andrew.htm
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2959.html

For information on Standing Bear, his people, and his case:
www.visitnebraska.org/reports/fam-native.html
www.indianlife.org/news4/bear.htm
http://www.nde.state.ne.us/SS/notables/bear.html
http://net.unl.edu/~swi/guide/stbear.html

For information on General George Crook:
http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/a_c/crook.htm

For Information on Bright Eyes (Susette La Flesche):
www.esu14.k12.ne.us/subject/notable/Susette-Bright-Eyes-LaFlesche-Tibbles
www.nde.state.ne.us/SS/notables/tibbles.html

Additional Resources:

Standing Bear & the Ponca Chiefs, by Thomas Henry Tibbles. University of Nebraska Press

Step Two: Create a Graphic Organizer

To prepare for writing your story, create a graphic organizer which displays the main ideas you will be writing about. Your organizer may be in the form of an outline, a time line, a web, etc. You may include photographs and artwork.

Step Three: Writing Your Story (Guidelines for Reporters)

To be a good reporter you must be accurate as to your facts. Include important details. Tell the complete story.

Who are you writing about? What is his/her name? Can you calculate this person's age? Where is this person from? What have you learned about this person that makes him/her "alive" for you. Your objective here is to capture your reader's attention and create for him/her the same sense of being alive that you feel about your subject.

What happened? Did your subject initiate an event, or did he/she react to something that happened? You want to bring the reader into the story and make him or her feel as if they were on the scene as a witness.

When did everything happen? We know the year is 1879. What you must be aware of is the sequence of events. What happened first? Then, what happened after that? Make sure that your reader is clear as to what is going on. You don't want to confuse him/her as to when an event occurred in relation to other events.

Where did the event occur? Make sure your reader is clear as to the location of events.

Step Four: Interviewing Your Subject

1.Good interviewers alway know what questions they want to ask before they talk to their subject. Generate a list of interview questions appropriate for your subject and for their part in your story.
Example: "Tell me, General Crook, why did you arrest Standing Bear?"

2. Write answers to your questions from the point of view of your subject. The answers should be consistent with what you have learned about your subject as a person.

Example: You learned that General Crook was a good soldier and did his best to do his job which was to implement and enforce the policies of the U.S. government regarding Native Americans. A possible answer to the question asked above might be, "I arrested Standing Bear because he left Indian Territory without permission."
If possible, use direct quotes you have found in your research.

How You Will Be Graded

Your story will be graded based on the quality of your writing, on how well you answer the who, what, when, and where questions, and on the quality of your interview with your subject. In addition, you will receive a group grade based on the quality of the newspaper produced.

Teacher Notes

Grade/ Unit: Grade 8, Units 8 and 12

Lesson length: Approximately one week, but will vary depending on the resource availability and class organization.

Standing Bear's case is important because it represents the first time Native Americans were legally recognized as having the rights of citizens under the Constitution. In this activity, students are asked to research the case, the lives of people involved in the case, and the historical background of the case which includes Andrew Jackson's policy of Indian removal, Manifest Destiny, and the Plains Indian War. The historical background research will be a review for the student, but should build on previously acquired knowledge and lead to an understanding of the later effects of Indian removal and Manifest Destiny.

History Social science Contents Standards.

8.8 Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people from 1800 to the mid-1800's and the challenges they faced, with emphasis on the West, in terms of:

1. the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, the importance of Jacksonian democracy and his actions as president (e.g., spoils system, veto of National bank, policy of Indian removal, opposition to Supreme Court)

2. The purpose, challenges and economic incentives associated with westward expansion including the concept of Manifest Destiny (e.g., Lewis and Clark expedition, accounts of the removal of Indians and the Cherokees' "Trail of Tears," settlement of the Great Plains) and the territorial acquisitions that spanned numerous decades

8.12 Students analyze the character and lasting consequences of Reconstruction, in terms of:

2. The reasons for the development of federal Indian policy and

the Plains wars with American Indians and their relationship to agricultural development and industrialization

History Social Science Analysis Skills.

Chronological and Spatial Thinking

3.students use a variety of maps and documents to identify physical and cultural features of neighborhoods, cities, states, and countries and to explain the historical migration of people, expansion and disintegration of empires, and the growth of economic systems

Research, Evidence and Point of View

2. students distinguish fact from opinion in historical narratives and stories

3. students distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, essential from incidental information, and verifiable from unverifiable information in historical narratives and stories

4.students assess the credibility of primary and secondary sources and draw sound conclusions from them

5. students detect the different historical points of view on historical events and determine the context in which the historical statements were made (the questions asked, source used, author's perspectives)

Historical Interpretation

2. student understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including the long-and short-term causal relations

This lesson is done in groups, which should be heterogeneous and assigned by the teacher rather than chosen by the students.

The lesson may be extended to include a brief study of Native American art forms and conventions. Students could then, using brown craft paper cut or torn to resemble an animal hide, illustrate Standing Bear's story

using Native American symbols painted on the "hide." This project may also be presented as an extra credit opportunity for individuals, for groups, or for partnerships chosen by the students. The following web sites provide examples of hide paintings from the period under study:

http://www.artsmia.org/art_in_america/12_1.html
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Resources/Maps/battle.html

A useful web site with information for involving students in the assessment process may be found at http://www.interactiveclassroom.com/articles_006.htm The site provides a model for students to design their own grading rubric. By doing so, students have an opportunity to really understand grading criteria and internalize them before beginning the work of the lesson.

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